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V I E W S

O F

BELIEVERS BAPTISM:

I. As an ACT of SUBLIME WORSHIP to the ADORABLE PERSONS in the GODHEAD.

II. As a REPRESENTATION of the SUFFERINGS of CHRIST, his DEATH, BURIAL, and RESURRECTION.

III. As an EMBLEM of REGENERATION and SANCTIFICATION.

IV. As the ANSWER or DECLARATION of a GOOD CONSCIENCE TOWARDS GOD.

V. As a POWERFUL OBLIGATION to NEWNESS of LIFE in a COURSE of GOSPEL OBEDIENCE.

VI. As a lively FIGURE of the natural DEATH of every CHRISTIAN:

DESIGNED

As an Introduction to a BODY of HYMNS OR BAPTISM; and to be bound up with them, as a Memorial for the daily use of all BAPTIZED BELIEVERS and their Children, especially for every Person that is a Candidate for BELIEVERS BAPTISM.

By JOHN FELLOWS.

The FOURTH EDITION.

L O N D O N:

Printed for G. KEITH, Gracechurch-Street. 1777.

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Printed by G. Kearsley, at the Crown and Key, in St. Pauls Church-yard



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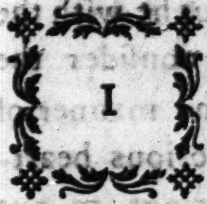
V I E W S

O P

BELIEVERS BAPTISM,

In a LETTER to the MINISTERS and MEMBERS-
of the BAPTIZED CHURCHES.

Dear and honoured Friends,

T is highly incumbent on all that love the LORD JESUS CHRIST in sincerity, and are glad to behold their SAVIOUR in every view in which he is pleased to reveal himself, to consider the dignity and glory of his holy institutions. These last legacies of a dying SAVIOUR; these pledges of his eternal and immutable love, ought to be received with the greatest reverence, and the warmest gratitude. And as they directly relate to the death of the GREAT REDEEMER, which is an event the most interesting; an action the most grand and noble that ever appeared in the world; they ought to be held in the highest esteem, and

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performed with the utmost solemnity. Of these institutions Baptism calls for our first regard, as it is appointed to be first performed: And however lightly the inconsiderate part of mankind may affect to treat this Ordinance, it ought to be remembered that CHRIST himself considered it, and submitted to it, as an important part of that righteousness which it became even the SON of GOD to fulfil. As this Ordinance is to be once performed, and not repeated; every Christian ought to be particularly careful that it is done in a right manner; or the benefit arising to the soul from this institution is lost, and lost for ever! We ought with the utmost deliberation and care, to consider the nature of its first institution; the manner of its primitive performance; the glorious heart-reviving truths it figuratively brings to our view; and its own native dignity, as an action, of the positive and ritual kind, the most great and noble in itself, and well-pleasing to GOD, that is possible for us to perform on this side heaven.

In this action, Christians, you behold the counsel of GOD: It is the result of his wise and eternal purpose; it is clearly commanded in his word; it is enforced by his own example;

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ple; and honoured in the most distinguished and wonderful manner, by every person in the adorable TRINITY. This Ordinance is no trivial affair, it is no mean thing; and whoever is so unhappy as to despise it, wants eyes to see its beauty and excellency. The GREAT SON of GOD himself submitted to it; the ETERNAL FATHER attested his approbation by a voice from heaven; and the HOLY SPIRIT appeared in a visible form, and adorned it with the manifestation of his glory. Nothing ever appeared in the world, either before or since, like this; nor was ever a deed performed by man, not intirely moral, so great and noble in itself, so pleasing to GOD, or so honoured from above. Let us then take a short view of this Ordinance; let us consider what it is, and what is meant by it; it would never be thus dignified and adorned, if there was not something in it worthy our attention.

I. It may be considered as A SOLEMN ACT OF WORSHIP. An act of worship is an acknowledgment of the being and perfections of GOD, with veneration and love, performed according to the divine will, not conformable to the fancies of men. And it is a manifest truth that this Ordinance can be a benefit to no person in the world, but those by whom

it is performed as an act of worship. Is it possible to suppose that it can be of any advantage to those who know not what they are doing; who see not its glory; know not its end and design; are unacquainted with its figurative meaning; whose souls are not affected; and who see not the GREAT REDEEMER in his own institution? But when a desire to submit to this Ordinance arises from a new nature; when it is performed by the special assistance of divine grace; with sincerity of soul, or a single intention to please God; when it is performed with the united powers of the heart, and a quick sensibility of the divine presence; when the living springs of grace in the heart are opened, and this Ordinance is submitted to in Faith, and with such beauty of holiness, as in some degree corresponds with the purity of the divine perfections; and directed to the noblest end, which is to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever; How great may be the advantage to the soul; and what extensive and lasting benefit may be obtained? This Ordinance considered as an act of solemn worship and adoration, directs our attention in a particular manner to each distinct person in the divine nature: We are called upon to adore the ETERNAL FATHER for his everlasting electing love, which

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which induced him to send his only Son to be the SAVIOUR of ruined sinners. We are called upon to adore the SON for the grandest, the most important, the most kind, generous, and benevolent action, that ever was performed in the eyes of men or angels; an action which will be eternally beheld by both with the highest admiration and praise, THE REDEMPTION OF OUR SOULS BY HIS BLOOD; and the Christian is called upon to adore the HOLY SPIRIT as the Lord and giver of spiritual life, and the author of all that light, and beauty of holiness, which will be in his heart for ever. Such considerations as these have a powerful tendency to affect the feeling heart; to touch all the springs of devotion; to awaken every warm and tender passion; and fill the whole soul with love, adoration, and praise. How natural is it for the devout heart, influenced by the HOLY SPIRIT, on this great and solemn occasion to approach the eternal throne with such sentiments as these? "Unto thee, O thou
"dread sovereign of the universe! thou great
"Father and God of all! thou eternal King
"of grace and glory! I desire to come in the
"way of thine own appointment. Thou art
"a sovereign God, and as such I desire to

“ adore thee. All thy works are perfect, and
“ all thy ways are right. Far be it from me,
“ great GOD, far be it from me, to dispute
“ the fitness of thy will; or think myself too
“ wise, or too great to submit to what thou
“ hast been pleased to command. The holy
“ Ordinance before me is thine own appoint-
“ ment, and derives a force and authority from
“ thy sovereign will expressly declared, which
“ no created being hath a right to oppose.
“ In this way, O LORD, I approach thy pre-
“ sence, I bow before thine eternal throne,
“ and worship thine awful Majesty. How
“ great art thou, O GOD, and how worthy to
“ be worshipped and adored! May I come
“ before thee with the utmost reverence
“ and awe, and may my heart be enlarged
“ with a sense of thy presence. How kind,
“ how condescendingly good art thou in ad-
“ mitting so worthless a creature to draw
“ nigh unto thee, and to a participation of
“ thy holy institutions: I would not esteem
“ the Ordinance before me an hard task, or
“ burdensome service; but rather look upon
“ it as an honourable and distinguishing pri-
“ vilege, that I am permitted, in this way, to
“ approach thee. How great is thy goodness,

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“ O my GOD, and what obligations am I un-
 “ der to love and serve thee ! Didst thou fix
 “ thy love upon me, and hadst thou thoughts
 “ of saving me from all eternity ? and shall it
 “ not be the constant endeavour of my soul,
 “ to do thy whole will and to live to thy glo-
 “ ry ! Didst thou give thy dear SON from thy
 “ bosom to die for my sins, and shall I coolly
 “ hesitate and be backward in the performance
 “ of that particular duty, whereby I am called
 “ upon to acknowledge him to the world ! Is
 “ the adorable REDEEMER not ashamed of me,
 “ and am I ashamed of him ! Dear LORD, I
 “ blush at the thought ! O thou bright image
 “ of the everlasting GOD made manifest in
 “ human flesh ! O thou great lover and re-
 “ deemer of souls ! thou kind compassionate
 “ SAVIOUR of sinners ! I desire in thine own
 “ Ordinance, to approach thee, and adore
 “ thee, as *my Lord and my God*. How great and
 “ how many have been my provocations, and
 “ from what dreadful wrath hast thou deliver-
 “ ed me ! How great have been thy sufferings
 “ in my stead ; and how small the return
 “ which thou requirest of me ! and shall so
 “ small a tribute be refused ! Hast thou, for
 “ my sake, been baptized in blood and fire,
 “ and

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“ and shall I refuse, at thy command to be
 “ baptized in water? *Hadst thou required some*
 “ *great thing, had not I done it?* and shall I
 “ hesitate a moment when thy injunction is
 “ no more than to *wash in Jordan and be clean!*
 “ Dear LORD, I am constrained by thine eter-
 “ nal love to own thee; and I would follow
 “ thee wheresoever thou goest. Shine on
 “ my soul, O my GOD, shew me thy salva-
 “ tion, and bring to my view those glorious
 “ things which thine Ordinance is designed to
 “ represent. Let me approach near to thyself,
 “ and savour me with a glimpse of thy glory.
 “ Erect thy throne in my heart, and may all
 “ the powers and faculties of my soul, and all
 “ the members of my body be devoted to thee.
 “ I take thee for my LORD, my KING and my
 “ only SAVIOUR, and should be glad to make
 “ it known to all the world that I come to thee,
 “ and to thee alone, for a full and free salva-
 “ tion. I renounce all other dependence, I
 “ would have no other hope, no other trust;
 “ but desire to be thine, thine only, and thine
 “ for ever. And thou, blessed SPIRIT of the
 “ eternal GOD, who wast pleased to honour
 “ this Ordinance with the visible manifestation
 “ of thy presence; in this way I draw nigh
 “ unto thee and adore thee. Be pleased, O,
 “ LORD

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“ LORD, to assist me. I would make no resolution, no promise in my own strength, for I know that all my firmness and stability depends on thee. Be pleased to carry me through the duty before me, in such a manner as may be comfortable to myself, and acceptable to my GOD. Lead me in safety along the slippery road of life, and make my conversation such as becometh the Gospel of CHRIST. Warm my Heart with thy presence, bear thy witness in me that I belong to the LORD: fill me with the fulness of thyself; and enable me to rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

II. The Ordinance of Baptism may be considered as a lively representation of the SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, HIS DEATH, AND HIS GLORIOUS RESURRECTION: The inventions of men may be adorned with superficial pomp and shew, and at first sight make a great and splendid appearance; but when closely examined, they lessen by degrees, and soon sink into their native nothingness. The contrary is the case with the things of GOD. How little soever they may appear to the loose and careless observer; they soon rise in the eye of the close and impartial enquirer; the farther he goes the less reason he has to repent his pains; a wonderful

derful and unexpected greatness, dignity and importance rises on his view; and he beholds in them a beauty and glory worthy their author. Such is the divine institution which we are now considering. How mean and despicable does it appear to those who only behold it as an immersion in water; but how grand, majestic and noble! and how does it fill that soul with devotion, and warm it with love, gratitude and joy, who beholds it as a lively representation of the Sufferings of CHRIST? We are led to this idea by the words of the GREAT REDEEMER himself, who said upon a view of his sufferings, *I have a Baptism to be baptized with*, the learned know it should be translated, *I have a plunging to be plunged with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!* Is there any Christian that can behold his suffering SAVIOUR without emotion? or can any action be esteemed mean which represents an event so interesting and important? What storms and tempests, what floods and whirlwinds of divine wrath have we deserved by our sins! and how surely would they have overwhelmed us, had not our great Redeemer appeared for us and suffered in our stead! Let us behold the illustrious sufferer. How was he overwhelmed with afflictions, and how heavy did the mighty vengeance fall on his head, when,

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when, with a mixture of amazement and terror, he cried out, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death!* What surrounding, what heart-rending sorrows pressed him on all sides! How great was his agony in the Garden, when he *sweat great drops of blood!* And with what extremity of torture, with what bitterness of grief did he cry out on the Cross, *My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?* Can it be supposed that any thing less than a total immersion of the whole body in water can represent these all-surrounding sorrows, these overwhelming sufferings? Was any part of our Saviour's body exempt; or were the dreadful sufferings he endured for our sakes, which were raging as divine wrath, and equal to the infinity of our sins, no more than a sprinkling! Can the rolling billows of divine wrath, rising high as heaven, wide as creation, and boundless as infinite space, be represented by a few drops of water! The like may be observed respecting the *death, burial, and resurrection* of CHRIST, which the volume of inspiration informs us, the Ordinance of Baptism is designed to bring to our view; how great the resemblance when performed by immersion? But who can behold any thing of this in the contrary mode?

III. The Ordinance of Baptism may be farther considered as an EMBLEM OF REGENERATION AND SANCTIFICATION. The great Apostle of the Gentiles, speaking of his exalted master, tells us that *We are buried with him by Baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* This not only implies that the regenerate only have a right to the Ordinance of Baptism; but that it is an emblem or representation of that important change. This is so manifest from the holy scriptures, that some have taken the emblem for the thing itself: They have not only supposed but boldly asserted, that Baptism and Regeneration are the same thing. But when the great Apostle, speaking to the primitive Christians, says, *Ye are washed; ye are sanctified; ye are justified; in the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT of our GOD:* That person must have a very confused conception of Gospel doctrine, who supposes him to mean no more than an outward corporeal washing. We can therefore by no means allow Baptism to be Regeneration: Yet we esteem it as an emblem of that blessed work; and in this view it appears in a very beautiful and pleasing point of light to the truly regenerate.

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IV. THE ANSWER, OR DECLARATION, OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE TOWARDS GOD, is another view in which the holy scriptures represent the divine institution which we are now considering. *The answer of a good conscience towards GOD*, not only relates to that diligence with which we ought to perform every duty of which we are convinced; but in this view some think it may be considered as having a forensic or judicial meaning. By such it is supposed to relate to an answer made upon oath, to the inquiry of a magistrate in a court of justice; so that the person who submits to this Ordinance, in a right manner, publicly and solemnly renounces the world, and all it contains, so far as it is inconsistent with the Gospel of God; and chooses CHRIST to be his master. He makes an open profession of his faith in CHRIST before all the world; and takes the oath of allegiance to him. He makes the most solemn promise, as it were upon oath, to be the Lord's; and to cleave to him, and him only.

V. The Ordinance before us may be considered and improved, as a powerful obligation to NEWNESS OF LIFE AND A COURSE OF GOSPEL OBEDIENCE; DISTINGUISHING THE CHRISTIAN FROM ALL OTHER MEN; AND DIVIDING THE CHURCH FROM THE WORLD.

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The Christian in this Ordinance having made an open public profession of his faith and love; having owned CHRIST as his Saviour, Lord and King; and having shewn a probity of heart and firmness of mind in following his divine master in an Ordinance so despised; he hereby lays himself under the highest obligations *to keep the commandments of God and the testimony of JESUS CHRIST*; he is influenced by the most powerful motives to *follow the Lamb wheresoever he goeth*, and to honour his Lord by a course of universal and persevering obedience. Our GREAT REDEEMER seems to have designed this Ordinance as a test of our sincerity; and to distinguish his followers from the rest of mankind. As a captain who to try a new soldier employs him at first in some arduous and important service, so our SAVIOUR, to try his own work, and to make the reality of his powerful grace in the hearts of his people, manifest to themselves and to the world, calls them out at first to a great and singular action, and requires their submission to an institution that is disgustful to their nature and mortifying to their pride. And indeed it must be acknowledged that to some persons, in some particular circumstances, it is a very severe trial; and requires great Grace to carry them through

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through an Ordinance which is in some degree terrible and painful to nature; which seems so mean to the carnal mind, and is so despicable in the eyes of the world. But such persons have often found to their joy that,

Though they with trembling steps attend,
Oppress'd with fears of various kind;
Yet they at CHRIST's Command descend,
And rising leave their fears behind.

If it be admitted, that CHRIST, by the Ordinance of Baptism, designed to divide his Church from the world, how manifest is it at first sight, that none are proper subjects but the regenerate; since to accept, or force in persons of a contrary character, has an apparent tendency to unite the world to the church; concerning which it was prophesied of old, *The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.*

VI. We may farther behold in this Ordinance, a LIVELY RESEMBLANCE OF THE NATURAL DEATH OF EVERY CHRISTIAN. A passage of holy writ already cited, informs us that *We are buried with CHRIST by Baptism into death.* This is a consideration of great importance, and the resemblance is obvious and striking. At death we take leave of our old acquaintance, and break our connexion with temporal affairs; we enter upon a new world and are employed

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in a new and more exalted scene of action; for every person, that is a proper subject of Baptism is no longer in a state of nature, but is born from above; he hates and departs from his old sins, and enters upon that noble and exalted course of conduct which in the sacred writings is beautifully and emphatically styled *newness of life*. The shivering timidity which we feel at approaching the water, may very aptly be compared to those fears which in the best of men, nature may feel at the prospect of her dissolution; and the fresh garments which we put on after Baptism may bring to our minds those splendid robes of light and immortality in which the christian will shine at the resurrection of the just.

Upon the whole, it is worthy of remark, how the beauty of this Ordinance is defaced, and its glory obscured, when either in the subject or mode it is changed from its primitive form of administration; how easy is it to observe that in either of these cases it loses its dignity, and dwindles into that nothingness which strongly marks, and particularly characterizes the inventions of men. The Ordinances of the Gospel are established by the authority of CHRIST as King and supreme Lawgiver in his Church; they are particularly enforced by his own example, and his will expressly declared;

clared; and as they have no dependance on any circumstances, which are liable to vary in different countries or distant periods of time, it necessarily follows that the primitive model of administration should be strictly and conscientiously adhered to. No pretence to greater propriety, nor any plea of inconveniency, can justify our boldly opposing the authority of God by the alteration of his law, and substituting a human Ordinance instead of a divine. In a former dispensation in which the ritual was numerous and burdensome, the great JEHOVAH was particularly jealous of his honour as *Supreme Lawgiver*, and looked upon the least innovation as a direct opposition of his authority. *Moses*, we are informed, *was admonished of God to make all things according to the pattern shewed him in the mount*: And those unfortunate Youths who presumed to alter the form of his religion, and worshipped him in a way he had not commanded fell under the severest marks of his displeasure; which shews that he looked upon the least innovation in the ceremonial part of his precepts, as an impious and daring opposition and contempt of his authority, and as deserving of peculiar and distinguished vengeance as a direct and open violation of the Moral Law. And as the great KING of the universe required such strictness and punctuality

lity, and insisted on such scrupulous exactness in the performance of the minutest rite belonging to the *legal dispensation*; it would be extremely difficult to assign a reason why he should be more lax and careless, and allow a greater scope to human discretion under the *Christian*. The greater light which shines in our Religion, the small number and simplicity of its ceremonies, and the end and design of those institutions being more clearly revealed, are reasons which strongly indicate the contrary. And if it be further observed that the religion of Jesus is particularly calculated to set aside worldly wisdom and mortify the pride of man, it cannot, without great absurdity be supposed that the sublime author of it will dispense with the performance of his positive laws, or admit of the least variation, to honour that wisdom, or indulge that pride which the whole scope of his Gospel hath a manifest tendency to abase. Surely then it behoves Christians in an affair of such consequence to be circumspect and wary; or how can they give a good account of their practice, and a satisfactory answer to that important question, *Who hath required this at your hands?* Sensible therefore of the pernicious consequences of error, let us carefully guard against it whatever appearance it may make, or with whatever superficial pomp and splendor it may

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may be adorned ; let us love the truth however it may be despised ; let us boldly and resolutely acknowledge and practise it ; let us receive it, *with all readiness of mind*, and like the ancient BEREANS, *search the scriptures daily whether those things are so.*

The author of these remarks has been led into more extensive and brighter views of the glory and beauty of the Ordinance of Baptism, than what he had before obtained, by lately composing a Book of Hymns on that Subject. He was desired to attempt a work of this kind by several Ministers, and Members of the Baptized Churches, both in London and the country. He hath endeavoured to go through the several parts of the subject in a regular systematical manner, so that the Hymns may be sung at the administration of the Ordinance, or at other times occasionally ; or the whole may be considered and read as a Treatise on Baptism in verse. And as verse is sooner committed to memory, and longer retained than prose, these Hymns may be learnt by children to impress their young minds with a lively and lasting sense of the beauty and dignity of this Ordinance. The copy has been revised by the Reverend Doctor Stennett, and several of the most considerable of the *London* Ministers ; it lay by a considerable time, and was revised over
and

and over again, and improved by its author. And he has had the pleasure to hear that these Hymns have been made useful in the closet, as well as the church; both by convincing, and making willing to submit to this holy Ordinance.

We whose names are hereto subscribed are personally acquainted with the author: We have seen and approve his poetical productions: The Hymns on Baptism we have encouraged, and shall continue to do the same: We hope they will be made useful to the advancement of the Cause of Truth, and with this view recommend them to our brethren.

JAMES TURNER, Birmingham.

JOHN BUTTERWORTH, Coventry.

JAMES BUTTERWORTH, Bromsgrove.

ISAAC WOODMAN, Sutton.

JOHN EVANS, Foxton.

ROBERT HALL, Arnsby.

JOHN RYLAND, Northampton.

JOHN RYLAND, junior.



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